



Washington State
Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery

Vashon Alliance to Reduce Substance Abuse (VARSA)

Vashon Youth and Family Services (VYFS)
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VARSA'S Mission:

"To respond to issues affecting the community, such as substance abuse, and work with community members in establishing an environment that creates a better quality of life."



Vashon is an island community, accessible only by boat or ferry via Seattle, Southworth, and Point Defiance terminals.



Vashon-Maury Island from the air looking south © Ray Pfortner

Vashon Island, Washington

Vashon Alliance to Reduce Substance Abuse (VARSA)

Vashon Island is a rural community located in southern Puget Sound in Western Washington, southwest of Seattle and north of Tacoma. The Island is part of unincorporated King County and does not have a local government. It is 37 square miles. While rural, it is influenced by urban areas, with nearly 50% of Vashon residents commuting to work in Seattle, Tacoma and Olympia.

Organizational Overview

Coalitions and Previous Successes in Prevention Initiatives:

In 2009, Vashon received a federal Drug Free Communities grant of up to \$125,000 per year for 10 years. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration oversee this grant that aims to: (1) *strengthen collaboration in the community to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth; and (2) reduce substance use among youth and over time among adults.*

Since 2003, King County Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Program (AODPP) has provided prevention funds to Vashon Youth and Family Services for school and community-based services, most recently for parenting education programs. The funding source is federal substance abuse block grant funds via Washington State Department of Social and Health Services' Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery Services.

Vashon Healthy Community Network (VHCN) is one of the grassroots coalitions established in 1994 by the Family Policy Council of Washington State. VHCN's focus has been on addressing the following: *youth substance abuse; domestic violence; child abuse and neglect; and school drop out.*

Community Resources

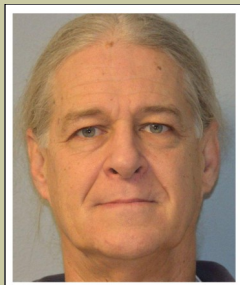
Stakeholders and Existing Resources:

Vashon is a tight-knit island community with key stakeholders (including education, human service providers, business, law enforcement, government, etc.) involved in various community efforts.

The Vashon community has resources including the school district, the service provider community, the VHCN and VARSA.

PRI Contacts

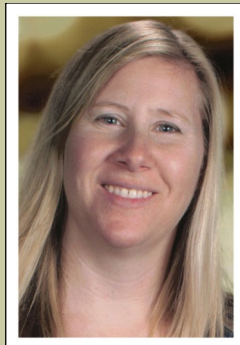
Coalition Coordinator:



Luke McQuillin

Vashon Youth and Family Services
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School Prevention/ Intervention Specialist:

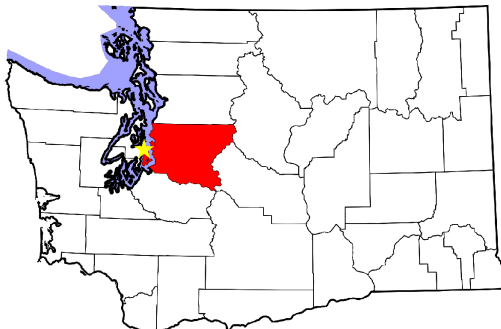


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Vashon Island, King County, WA



According to the report, [VASHON HEALTHY COMMUNITY NETWORK/DRUG FREE COMMUNITIES COALITION, Community Assessment, September 2010](#), community members have focused on issues including: (a) unsupervised parties held at various beach locations; and (b) altered lives of adolescents due to addiction and other injuries associated with substance use.

The PRI aims to concentrate substance abuse prevention efforts in a small geographic area based upon need and community readiness. King County AODPP and Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSED) staff analyzed various needs assessment data, including 84 indicators from the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's Report Card and the Healthy Youth Survey. The data review, as well as determination of community readiness, confirmed the need to focus more prevention efforts on Vashon.

Substance Use Issues:

A significant challenge for this rural, isolated community is the community norm which supports and tolerates substance use (especially regarding alcohol and marijuana) among Vashon Islanders. Other concerns are local "hot spots" where youth gather to drink alcohol and smoke marijuana, and the lack of schools' comprehensive prevention curricula related to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Summary of Prevention Program:

VARSA has developed a strategic action framework that includes establishment of a board governance structure and enhancement of community partnerships. It has also identified specific strategies and activities addressing community challenges related to substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and school drop out.

As part of the PRI, PSED has placed a full-time Prevention/Intervention Specialist (P/I S) at McMurray Middle School and Vashon Island High School. The P/I S will assist with planning and implementing prevention strategies in these schools and in the surrounding community. King County AODPP has assigned a part-time Community Coordinator to manage the overall project, which will include providing technical assistance and training, participating in VARSA meetings, and taking primary responsibility for reporting and evaluation.

Vashon Island

Population (2010): 10,624	Ethnic Diversity:	Median Household Income:
	White 93.6%	\$79,446
	Black 0.5%	
	Native American 0.7%	
Zoning: Rural	Asian/ Pacific Islander 1.6%	VARSA Founded: 2009
	Hispanic/ Latino 2.6%	
	Multi Racial 2.7%	